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resolved. He still stands upon his somewhat deterministic statement, "One must be born anew." But from another standpoint his contribution is not only noteworthy, but momentous. To the metaphysical problem Jesus contributes nothing, to the ethical problem everything. For no objection can lie against the fact of law and order even in the spiritual realm, provided they are not the expression of an all-powerful and arbitrary Unreason. Every instinct of man revolts against accepting the idea that arbitrary lawlessness is solely concerned in determining his highest spiritual welfare. Jesus admits—emphasizes—the fact of the mystery of the course of spiritual things, but asserts that it is neither lawless nor arbitrary.

The one thing which we must have if we would remain at all content and easy in mind about the universe in which we live is a confidence that the fundamental foundation of all is reasonable and just. Jesus gives us a further assurance that

it is also loving. Of course it is logically contradictory to have at one and the same time a recognition of deterministic law and faith in the values of spiritual and mental aspiration. One cannot help the paradox, but it is not a desperate situation if one is at the same time convinced of a basic and reasonable rightness of fundamental cosmic foundation.

I expect that Nicodemus went away from Jesus astonished perhaps, perhaps nonplussed, but certainly comforted, unless his interest in the question had been purely academic, as I do not think it was.

Jesus states his whole message in these verses from John. It is hard to see what more could have been added. Certain details of method only, which, as he said, would be unintelligible to us. Neither lawlessness nor arbitrariness, but order, reason, and love control our spiritual welfare. As one of his latter prophets has said, "All's love, yet all's law."

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## RIVAL INTERPRETATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

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### VI. APOCALYPTICISM (*Concluded*)

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#### 2. Principal Features of Jewish Apocalypticism

The contact with Babylonian and Persian culture in the earlier period following upon the destruction of the

Jewish state and the contact with Greek culture in the later period—to mention only the most important foreign influences—gave a powerful stimulus to the Jewish intellect and vastly widened

its horizon. Babylonian astrology and Persian dualism gave to the Jews a new knowledge of the world, and Grecian thought gave them a new view of its meaning. This intellectual expansion was accompanied by a deepening of their moral and religious life. This came to them as a consolation for their terrible losses. Two real worlds, the heaven and the earth, besides the shadowy realm of Sheol or the underworld, now came into view. Man is of the earth and his days are few. But Jahwe God is in the high heaven above all earthly things and free from all earthly contingencies. There he lives and reigns eternally. Superhuman beings serve him there. He rules also on the earth and the angels of his power go forth from his presence bearing his decrees and effecting his purposes on the earth. All the events that occur on the earth are determined in advance in heaven. So to say, that which took place on earth was first enacted in heaven and must inevitably come to pass. If men could but enter heaven, or if the veil that separates heaven from earth could be withdrawn for a time, men would be able to see beforehand the things which are to come to pass. What is true of the earth is true also of the underworld, for Jahwe is lord there also and predetermines the fate of its denizens. Thus there lies before men the possibility of obtaining a knowledge of the distant future.

The possibility becomes an actuality. The new world becomes the basis of a new view of human knowledge. Men have actually witnessed the lifting of the veil between heaven and earth. There have been apocalypses, revelations, of those things that happen in

heaven. Men have had visions of that realm and they have heard voices speaking to them from it. The disclosures that came to men in this way are not to be classed with things that they learn in the ordinary manner. The sight and the hearing they enjoyed were special gifts bestowed upon the few. They were the seers, the prophets of their God. This knowledge was not merely natural but, as we are accustomed to say, supernatural, miraculous. It was certain that they who obeyed the heavenly vision should infallibly be blessed. The word that came from heaven could not fail.

Moreover the apocalypses disclosed the secret causes of the events for whose coming believers were to look so hopefully. They belonged to the same order as the knowledge concerning them. They were not brought about through the normal working of those things we see about us, but by the special act, the determining will of God. Apart from this they could not happen. If God thus intervened by his mighty power to bring to pass things that would be otherwise impossible, then the tremendous events which the seers were now foretelling and which seemed so contrary to expectation—the descent of Messiah from heaven, the resurrection from the dead, the assembling of all mankind for judgment, the burning of the world and the wicked with it, and the creation of a new world for the righteous or the taking of them up into heaven—would surely occur. Here, then, their religious faith found its firm support. With such a basis of confidence an oppressed and impoverished people could bid defiance to all the powers of this world or the world

beneath. These are the themes of the Jewish apocalyptic.

It is a very striking feature of those Jewish apocalypses which have been committed to writing, that they are all pseudonymous. The writers conceal their personal authorship under the name of some accredited prophet or worthy of the past. Such names as Enoch, the Twelve Patriarchs, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, are attached to the apocalypses. What is the secret of this self-effacement? It could not have been simply a means of avoiding the danger of identification which is often so real to the writers among an oppressed people. It must have been mainly for the sake of securing for their messages the credence that attached to the utterances of men who were commonly regarded as the special messengers of their God—men who had seen the heavenly things and spoke by the spirit of Jahwe. That is to say, the authors of the Jewish apocalyptic firmly believed that their own utterances were revelations from heaven, visions given by God, and they sought to persuade their readers of the same by attributing their works to men in whom the people already believed. This brings out another very interesting fact related to the production of Jewish apocalyptic. We shall indicate it.

The apocalyptic writings cover, roughly speaking, a period of time stretching from the second century before Christ to the end of the first Christian century. The events of the times before the captivity were now far back in the past. The common tendency among men to idealize the past was accentuated among the Jews of

those later days through the contrast with their former condition. Those patriotic statesmen of the former days who gave a moral interpretation of Israel's history and attempted to direct the policy of the state by their forecasts of coming changes were now among the national heroes. They had foretold the things that had come to pass. They were inspired of Jahwe. They had had visions of the heavenly things. The things which eye saw not and ear heard not and which entered not into the heart of the common man had been revealed to them. If the prophets had foretold the things which had already come to pass why should they not also have foretold the things which were even yet to come? And so the new seers, believing that they too had visions given them by God, disclaimed all honor for themselves and ascribed their experiences to the acknowledged sages of the past in order to establish the hearts of the people in the confidence that the things which they had seen in vision were really about to occur. This use of the works of the ancient prophets was possible through the collection of their writings by the learned and devout scribes of the people. They had not hesitated to attach the names of known prophets to writings whose authorship was unknown in order to preserve those works and secure for the whole body of the collected writings the veneration that would ensure the loyal obedience of the people. That is to say, the scribes had already made a virtual canon of scripture, a collection of the utterances of men whose word was the word of God, the words of men who were given a knowledge inaccessible to others. Jew-

ish Apocalypticism leans for support upon a canon of inspired scripture.

We may now briefly summarize the results of our study to this point. First, Jewish Apocalypticism is an outcome of the doctrine of a dual world, the earth and the heaven above the earth. There was also a shadowy underworld obscurely related to the heaven, but like it in that it was ordinarily invisible. Secondly, it was a doctrine of the pre-determination of all events by the irresistible decretive will of God, a doctrine of divine predestination. Thirdly, it was a doctrine of human foreknowledge of future events by means of supernatural vision, a theory of the knowledge of the invisible. Fourthly, it was a universalistic interpretation of human history in contrast with the narrower nationalism of the ancient prophets, and it thereby carried with it the enfranchisement of the individual. Finally, Apocalypticism offered a moral interpretation of all human history. Everything was viewed from the standpoint of a universal and final day of judgment (the idea of a canon of inspired scripture is intimately associated with Apocalypticism, but is not essential to it). If these things are so, Apocalypticism, so far from being a degenerate offspring of prophetism, was the very flower of prophetism and brings the era of Jewish prophecy to a close.

### **3. Apocalypticism in Early Christianity**

We turn once more to the Petrine confession. The pronouncement that Jesus was the Messiah, while it did not determine which of the many different views that were current in Jewish apocalyptic

was to become the Christian view, did finally interpret the mission of Jesus through the general apocalyptic view of the world and of human life. Apocalyptic became the native air in which early Christianity lived and breathed. It provided for the new age the answer to the question of the meaning of the career of Jesus, his relation to the all-determining will of God, and his relation to the destiny of mankind universally. Apocalyptic became for Jewish believers, and to a large extent for generations of Gentile believers after them, the determinate mode of expressing the Christian faith. So closely do the cast of thought in the Jewish apocalyptic and the prevailing thought in the New Testament coincide that to the reader who is unacquainted with the Jewish Apocrypha and whose knowledge of these ancient people is drawn wholly from the Old and the New Testament, it must have seemed, as he read the foregoing account of the character of Jewish Apocalypticism, that it was derived directly from the New Testament.

The books of our New Testament came almost entirely, if not altogether, from the hands of Jewish believers in the messiahship of Jesus, and they are addressed to readers most of whom are presupposed to be familiar with Jewish thought. So far as the general type of thought is concerned, nothing stands out more prominently than the fact of our having before us there a Christian recast of the Jewish apocalyptic. This is a matter that claims our attention somewhat in detail.

First of all, the New Testament is thoroughly charged with the conscious-

ness of the contrast between two worlds, heaven and earth (with also a vague recognition of a real lower world different from both). The contrast turns in favor of the heaven. The interest and hope of believers are concentrated there. The presence and activity of God on earth and among men do not alter the fact that he is pre-eminently in heaven. The words of the invocation so dear to all Christendom make it indisputable: "Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." From thence came the Christ to earth and thither he has returned, to come a second time. Whether it be Matthew or Paul or John who speaks, it is the same. The conception is more or less realistic in all, and the very foundation of the Christian hope seems at times to lie there. Believers' expectations of future blessedness are made to depend on the reality of that heaven, for they hope to be raised from their graves or to ascend from the surface of the earth at the coming of Christ to be with him—though this is not the invariable way of putting it, and sometimes the language seems to be symbolic rather than literally descriptive.

The denizens of these worlds are clearly distinguished, and for the most part easily recognized. Angels of God from heaven frequently appeared to the sight of believing men, speaking to them, assisting them in their tasks or ministering to their comfort and well-being. Demons from the lower world were also banefully active everywhere, afflicting men with ills or deceiving and beguiling them into sin—though there are no references to their visibility. Life is sometimes represented as a constant

battle with these hidden foes, for while their home was in the underworld their operations were on the earth or even in the heights above where the good angels are. Hence the moral conflicts in which men were engaged might appear as pitched battles with monstrous spiritual forces in the higher regions. As Paul puts it—"Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." What a dignity and grandeur was thereby attached to our human moral struggles! Jesus had the angels of God at his command, and to him and his followers they rendered service. It will not do to call this mere religious rhetoric, for in those times it all seemed very real.

So profoundly impressed were these first-century believers with the reality of their heritage in that higher world that the hope of the messianic kingdom, which they had inherited from the Jews, was conceived no longer, after the manner of the prophets, as growing up out of better moral conditions on the earth, but as the expectation of a city-state that should descend to earth out of the skies after the evil world had been destroyed. The imagery of the New Testament, when these themes are discussed, is most impressive. For vividness and magnificence these portrayals have never been excelled. And no wonder, because the stake was the most momentous possible. No effort was spared to excite and sustain the expectation of a speedy apocalypse of the Redeemer from on high. Striking references to this hope are found almost

everywhere. We quote a single passage from one of the letters of Paul: "For our citizenship is in heaven: from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things to himself."

When we turn to the accounts of the manner in which the gospel was proclaimed from the first the apocalyptical cast of thought is equally manifest. Visions, dreams, voices, and visitants from the heavenly realm are frequent accompaniments of the early preaching. These were the seals of the divine authority of the message. Thus it is no cause of surprise if the conceptions, convictions, and reasonings of the speakers and writers were often viewed by them as direct impartations from heaven and incomparably higher in worth than the natural thoughts of men. In what other way was it open to them to affirm that they believed that the new life they were living was itself the life divine? The question which would trouble us today—How such things were psychologically possible?—seems never to have occurred to them. The nearest they came to it was by referring their higher thoughts to the inner working of the Spirit of God on their minds. Many pages might be filled with quotations illustrative of the Apocalypticism of the New Testament writers. A few references must suffice.

If we turn to the accounts of the birth of Jesus, we find the occurrences connected with it represented as the outcome of action from a higher divine

world and not from the human will itself. For example, Matthew says: "Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise: when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit." Then passing to Joseph's situation he adds: "But when he thought on these things, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, . . . ." And so the account continues. Magi from the East are guided to the young child by a moving star and they return to their country by a different route because of a warning from God by a dream. By a dream Joseph is directed to take the child to Egypt, by a dream he is told by an angel to return, and by a dream he is warned to go to Galilee. This is the manner in which the early Christians expressed their confidence that Jesus had come to the world by the predetermining will of God, and that the earthly events pertaining thereto had been similarly ordered by God. In Luke's account the representations of heavenly intervention are even more vivid. Angelic messengers, divine inspirations, voices from the sky, signalize the advent of the expected Messiah. Or if we turn to the accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are equally impressed with the vigor of the apocalypses. Earthquakes, appearances of the dead to the living, the deeds and words of heavenly angels, startling appearances and disappearings of Jesus himself, attest the truth of the faith in him and prove the supernatural character of his mission. Or, again, if we take the accounts of his ministry, they are studded with occurrences of intervention from another world. A notable

instance is the transfiguration. We quote from Mark:

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter and James and John and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them, and his garments became glistening, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. And there appeared unto them Elijah and Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answereth and saith to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. . . . And there came a cloud overshadowing them; and there came a voice out of the cloud: This is my beloved Son: hear ye him. And suddenly looking round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

This manner of narration is quite generally characteristic of the whole of the accounts of Jesus' career. They are cast in the mold of a belief in heavenly apocalypses. Everything is conceived miraculously. Now, to remove the miraculous elements from the story is to rob it of its peculiar power. It is not for us to seek to modernize these narratives by excising the overt interventions. That would be an act of violence destructive of the peculiar merits of the gospel records. Whilst these accounts would sound very artificial if produced in our times, they were entirely natural to the minds of religious men in those times.

It is, therefore, perfectly in keeping with the spirit of those times that Jesus should commonly express his mind in the forms of apocalyptic. There is scarcely an utterance of his of any length which does not embrace apocalyptic elements, and it is just what we might expect when we find him offering his disciples startling and impressive

apocalyptic discourses before he suffered. As elsewhere, wars, pestilences, cleaving heavens, falling stars, visible descent of the Son of Man from heaven, and the judgment of the world are outstanding features. The great Apocalypse of John which stands at the end of our canon is, in its general spirit and mode of utterance, quite in harmony with the remainder of the Jewish material in our New Testament. It is a paean of coming triumph for Christians over their oppressive foes and the unseen forces of the regions of Evil. This concatenation of visions demonstrates the unconquerableness of the primitive faith. Taking for granted the dualistic cosmology, the belief that happenings on earth were predetermined by heavenly enactments, the belief that disclosures of the future outworking of the divine will are made to men through supernatural means, and the assurance that Jesus was the appointed King of the ages bound to overthrow the power of evil in the world, it is difficult to conceive a more effective vindication of the early Christian faith than this book offers.

It would not be well to pass to later periods of Christian history without pointing out that the New Testament contains many elements of a different character from the Jewish apocalyptic. As the Christian gospel was carried into distant portions of the Roman Empire and beyond, it met types of spirituality very different from the Jewish. The spirit of the Greco-Roman philosophy of religion, especially in Gnosticism, and the Roman conception of world-government were mighty forces to be reckoned with by any propaganda that sought to become world-



wide. The Christian Gospel had to adjust itself to the new demands these made upon it and proved its world-dominating power by doing so. We shall speak later of the manner in which this was accomplished. It is sufficient at this point simply to state that already with New Testament times this work of assimilating ethnic spirituality had begun. The writings of Paul and John and the Epistle to the Hebrews are evidences. But it should be noted that even in those portions where the ethnic spirit is manifest the spirit of the apocalyptic survives and mingles with the other. We see it in the Pauline letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians. The writer, with all his ideas of the immanence of the divine and with his readiness to make use of the Gnostic cosmology, still thinks very largely in the terms of the Jewish apocalyptic. We see it in the Gospel of John, where the high mysticism and spirituality of the writer have not yet led him to abandon Apocalypticism. We see it also in Hebrews, where Alexandrian philosophy with all its allegorism has not succeeded in doing away with a literal heaven above the earth, the actual ascent of Jesus into it, and his future real descent. We conclude, therefore, our study of the early Christian interpretation of Christianity by saying that, so far as the books of the New Testament disclose it to us, that interpretation is throughout prevalingly apocalyptical.

#### **4. Apocalypticism in Catholic and Protestant Creeds**

An account of the influence of this interpretation of Christianity upon the life and thought of the ancient Greek

church, the mediaeval Roman church, and modern Protestant churches, together with the controversies and divisions connected with the struggle between it and successive modernization of it would fill a volume. We must content ourselves with little more than a bare mention of those features of it which have persisted among the majority of Christians.

It was not possible that the peoples of the near East with their native spirit of piety of the metaphysical or mystical sort should, on becoming Christians, immediately abandon that which had been sewn into their natures for centuries so as to become the warp and woof of their inner life and that Jewish Apocalypticism should be substituted for it. That would be an act of violence. Neither was it possible for the great Church which was growing up and seeking to justify its claim to be the true and sole heir to the Christian tradition either to repudiate the early apocalyptic or rewrite it. The only thing that was possible if the Church was to maintain its claims and retain all classes of believers within its bosom was that the traditional apocalyptic and the new philosophy should be written down together without an attempt to reconcile them or an acknowledgement that a reconciliation was needed. The retention of the primitive apocalyptic was all the more imperative since there was a growing belief that the writings of apostolic men were new "scriptures" and therefore an authoritative declaration of truth, a law of faith for all time. Thus it came about that when the church drew up her creed the new philosophy and the old interpretation of the

apocalypticists were placed side by side. In all the successive developments of the Nicene Creed of the ancient Catholic church there is reiterated the confession of the expectation that Jesus Christ who had "ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father" was to "come again with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end." It is also affirmed: "I look for the resurrection of the dead," which is presently interpreted to mean, "the resurrection of the body," so as to set aside positively all spiritualizations of that portion of the creed.

When the western church became Roman it was still further from possibility that the apocalyptic interpretation should suffice. For the church had now consciously assumed the burden of responsibility for the task of renovating by normal means the very world of whose future Apocalypticism had despaired. Yet the Roman church was compelled, equally with the Greek church, to retain the ancient apocalyptic confession. But this Apocalypticism was no dead letter of the law of faith in this instance. On the contrary, it became a powerful instrument for impressing the popular mind with the transcendent worth of the moral implications of the Christian faith. The approach of the day of universal judgment, the resurrection of the dead in the body, the irrevocable sentence to heaven or hell, became the ground of those mighty appeals to the imagination and the conscience which have enabled the Roman church to hold its millions in leash. At the same time also, the idea of a special, miraculous, and exclusive communica-

tion of truth to chosen men became an instrument for fastening upon the people the claims of the Church to obedience.

Protestantism, with its biblicism and its insistence upon the restoration of the primitive faith in its purity, opened the door to a fuller restoration of Apocalypticism than Romanism permitted. It is true that the Protestant insistence upon the sole authority of the Scriptures has prevented a recrudescence among Protestants, to any appreciable extent, of the visions and trances that were so deeply cherished by Catholic pietists, but it logically demanded the restoration of the whole primitive view of things. That it did not commonly go so far among Protestants was owing to the strength of their moral convictions and their practical good sense. Nevertheless it did pave the way for a repeated recrudescence of millenarianism with its pessimistic view of the world. From this Protestantism still suffers in many quarters, but, on the whole, it is to be said that Protestants have been content to use only those portions of ancient apocalyptic which were the main basis of the Catholic appeal to the minds of the people, namely the factual representation of the coming, the ascent, and the return of Jesus (in the distant future), the day of judgment, the resurrection, the end of the world, and a literal heaven and hell. In one other respect, Apocalypticism persists among Protestants. By its repudiation of an immanent authority in the Church in favor of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, it tended to establish in the Protestant churches the view that the saving truth of religion is communicated to men through supra-natural channels of trans-

mission which are not to be subjected to the canons of our ordinary thinking. It is only in recent times that this feature of Apocalypticism has been giving way.

### 5. Value of Apocalypticism

We shall conclude the discussion of our subject with an estimate. Apocalypticism as an interpretation of Christianity has a fourfold merit. First, it affirms the reality of an unseen world. In this it makes response to a profound longing of the human heart. For among all enlightened peoples who have reflected deeply on the meaning of life, the transitory nature of the goods of this present world and their failure to satisfy the deepest longings of the heart have become proverbial. The spirit of man longs for the eternal and unchangeable, the city which has foundations, the things that cannot be shaken, whose goods, once attained, are ours forever. Such a world, if destined to be ours, would not only secure for us release from the pangs of failure and disappointment here, but the expectation of it would impart a spirit of resignation in the midst of present distresses. The records of Christian piety abound in proofs of this ministry of Apocalypticism. The persecuted in all the Christian centuries have borne unequivocal testimony to the sustaining power of the confidence in the reality of that better world. The belief in the reality of the visions men have had of that world has aided the minds of the unreflecting to reach an experience of peace, in striking contrast to the restlessness that springs from unaided speculation.

But this has not proved to be an un-mixed good. The low estimate of this

present world by contrast has often led to a disparagement of the common tasks of life, a lack of sympathy for those whose lot is inextricably bound to material things, and a generally pessimistic and censorious spirit. Earth is too often regarded only in its contrast with a heaven, and man only in his contrast with God. In its theory of the higher knowledge, Apocalypticism exhibits another weakness. For by its depreciation of our ordinary thinking on religious subjects and its reference of all divine truth to supra-natural means of communication open, as a matter of fact, to the favored few only, it has tended to the creation of a religious aristocracy and to a depreciation of scientific investigation and philosophic enquiry. Where Apocalypticism has flourished there has been almost invariably a corresponding low estimate of the value of the native working of our minds and a shrinking from the severer tasks of learning. In short, by its predication of two separated worlds and its claims to a supra-natural knowledge, Apocalypticism tends to bisect our human life, to destroy its unity, and to make a free natural communion between God and man impossible.

Second, Apocalypticism has the merit of affirming a purposive, divine government of the world. It lifts the whole of human life above the realm of chance. It leaves no room for fatalism or the idea that the course of the world is a meaningless round of happenings. Moreover it attaches a dignity to human affairs by holding that in the midst of all complexity and seeming confusion there is an end toward which all moves, and therefore there is order. Hence also the

power of foresight and predetermination so characteristic of men is recognized as of like nature with the supreme power in the universe. There is therefore a dignity attached to human actions both good and bad.

But this merit of Apocalypticism is seriously compromised by its conception of the manner in which this divine end is attained. The world is supposed to be controlled from without, and its history has too arbitrary a character to permit us a reasoned view of its course. If the natural course of things is to be subjected, without warning, to interference from without, and nature's laws either do not exist as laws or they may be set aside at any time by fiat from on high, then the mode of the divine government of the world is contrary to that which now commends itself to us in political circles as worthy of our allegiance today.

Third, Apocalypticism by its picture of a great judgment day stands for the supremacy and finality of righteousness in the affairs of men. The expectation of such an event imparts a necessary sternness in the presence of crime. It tends to support the affirmations of the human conscience and to raise the moral powers of our nature to their rightful supremacy. It sets aside as frivolous every theory that tends to belittle the human personality, and it stamps as damnable every attempt to rob men of their moral initiative and responsibility. It tends, therefore, to confirm and to purify the efforts of civic communities to establish methods of unswerving justice in the government of the people.

On the other hand, it may be doubted whether the postponement of the day

of judgment to the distant future does not tend to a legalistic view of our relations to God and to an obscuration of the truth that the execution of divine justice is immanent in human life, that the judgment day is now. It has thus indirectly supported conceptions of salvation that represent it as an unnatural resort to special provisions for escaping at last the consequences of sins. Its views of life are serious, indeed, but not serious enough.

Fourth, Christian Apocalypticism has the merit of standing for the supreme worth of the personality of Jesus Christ as interpretative of the worth of our human personality and as the divine ideal which is to conquer the world. But by regarding him as coming into our world in unnatural ways from without, as accepting our earthly condition only for an interval and as now occupying a realm altogether different from ours, it is open to the charge of making him appear like an accident in human history, and in the end as having only a partial kinship with us. The outcome must be a loss of confidence in the value of the hope of being like him here.

It becomes a question for the modern Christian how far he may hold to those eternal realities set forth in Apocalypticism, how far he can be Christian and yet decline to be bound by the modes of thought and utterance so largely characteristic of the early Christian believers. Are we not more loyal to Jesus Christ and the faith he gave to men, if we set aside as temporary the forms of that faith which cannot commend themselves to our best judgment and sincerest trust and at the same time

seek to retain and fulfil the spirit of his life than if we regard the spirit as bound to the letter? Apocalypticism was a natural mode of thought in early Chris-

tian days, but has it not become unnatural for our days? Are we not false to the ultimate spirit of Christianity if we continue to retain it?

## THE ALLEGED EGOTISM IN THE DEMAND FOR PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

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*As never before the world is interested in immortality. To no subject has more thought been given. War makes death more immediate and real. Death gives us more concern as to the future. Are we selfish in wanting to live beyond death?*

In his recent theological brochure, *God the Invisible King*, Mr. H. G. Wells has written as follows:

Many people seem to find the prospect of a final personal death unendurable. This impresses me as egotism. I have no such appetite for a separate immortality. God is my immortality; what, of me, is identified with God, is God; what is not is of no more permanent value than the snows of yesterday.<sup>1</sup>

I choose the foregoing passage as a text for some remarks upon the prevalent, and perhaps growing, opinion which is there expressed. One hears a great deal about a certain sordid selfishness in those who cannot accept for man what is called the "common law of death." It is often suggested in the rationalist press that only the promise of a special and a quite unreasonable privilege in this respect for humanity beyond all other living things can blind the Christian world to the insuperable objections

against the Christian view. The more strident voices accuse us of intellectual dishonesty, of accepting a bribe to play fast and loose with evidence; in short, of what Huxley branded in his singular phrase as "the sin of faith." Mr. Wells uses this last word, as becomes one who is not a mid-Victorian, in a different sense from Huxley's. But he means very much the same and belongs to the same tradition. "Never more," he writes, "shall we return to those who gather under the cross. By faith we disbelieved and denied."<sup>2</sup> He has exhausted himself in panegyric upon those calm, scientific reasoners who adjust their creed strictly to the facts before them, and asks, almost in despair, when other thinkers—presumably philosophers, sociologists, or theologians—will learn the object-lesson in candor which a chemical or physical laboratory is fitted to teach them.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Preface, pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>2</sup> *God the Invisible King*, p. 13.